

Provo Herald 9-23-70

Scenic Railway Interests Given Until April 1 to Prove Project Feasibility

HEBER — The Utah State Road Commission Tuesday rejected all bids to remove the former Denver and Rio Grande Western trackage from the Olmsted power plant to Heber city.

The action of the commission opens the way for the development of a scenic railway which is proposed by the Wasatch Railway Museum Foundation.

The commission stated that the group would have until April 1, 1971 to prove the financial feasibility of the tourist railway which is scheduled from Wildwood to Heber City.

Lowe Ashton, Heber, chairman of the foundation committee said, "We have really only gained a breather. Now we must come up with the capital to put the trackage in shape and to bring the rolling stock into the valley. We will be rolling by April 1 or not at all."

The scenic railroad has a master plan which begins with the currently proposed route from Heber, down the Provo Canyon. The eventual plan is to extend the route to include a proposed Swiss Village which is to be located in the Wasatch Mountain State Park.

The presentation before the State Road Commission was made by a group which included Jay R. Edwards, foundation president, E. M. McLaughlin, secretary and treasurer; State Representative Dan Dennis, of Duchesne; State Senator Robert Clyde; Lowe Ashton, Leon Ritchie and Duane Price, all of Heber.

MRS. MIMI D. ...
9-23-70
Des News

Letter to Editor 'Creeper' Plan Utah Boon

Business and civic groups and other citizens are interested in preservation and operation of the historic "Heber Creeper" railway line that has great potential value to the state. Their request of the State Highway Department not to contract removal of the Provo Canyon railroad tracks at this time is reasonable and sensible.

The request by this alert group of Utahns would not interfere with plans to start construction of the highway in the lower part of the canyon next spring. Construction in the upper part of the canyon will not begin for several years.

Anyone familiar with such thriving short scenic railroads as those in California and Colorado knows this line would attract tourists to Utah and would draw numerous people off I-15 and U.S. 40 to stop and board this unique ride into the scenic heart of our beautiful mountain recreation area and along lovely Deer Creek Reservoir. This scenic beauty would enchant tourists to stay longer and instill a desire to return to beautiful Utah.

With proper cooperation by the state, interested parties working for this project could have this attractive, historic, scenic railway in operation next summer.

The 1886 railroad bridge at the mouth of Provo Canyon is a historic, if not artistic, landmark, just as the railroad is. Let's not have ramrod highway methods that would destroy our valuable and vital historic, recreation and tourist attractions.

—JOHN L. SULLIVAN
5394 Avalon Dr.

Tracks Cleared for 'Creeper'

The tracks were cleared Tuesday by state officials to let the "Heber Creeper," a tourist train running between Heber City and Wildwood, speak for itself and say "I think I can" . . . or can't.

Acting on a resolution from groups in Heber City, the State Road Commission decided to delay until April 1 the tearing out of train roadbed in the lower part of Provo Canyon.

This, the Heber City groups said, would give them time to

complete an economic feasibility study of the Creeper's potential success or failure. If it looks successful, they want the tracks open so they can get rolling stock up the canyon from Provo to Heber City.

Chance Given

Gov. Calvin L. Rampton met earlier in the day with Road Commission personnel and he agreed the Heber City groups should have a chance to set up the train, if possible.

It "would be short sighted of

us" to not give the Creeper people a chance to set the train up, the governor said, as long as it doesn't hold up the road-widening project in the canyon.

The state recently purchased the railroad right-of-way and rails from Olmsted in the mouth of the canyon to Heber City, said Blaine J. Kay, state highway engineer. Cost was about \$200,000 for salvageable rails and \$65,000 for the right-of-way.

Right-of-Way

But only part of the right-of-way will be needed by the state for the road-widening project — the portion below Wildwood. And the portion from Wildwood to Heber City is being sought for the tourist train.

Gov. Rampton, while noting he had no objections, cautioned officials to be sure the state gets all of its money out of the land and rails if the developers decide to go ahead with the project.

'Creeper' Plan Utah Boon

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State Defers Pact to Clear Rails

Special to The Tribune

VERNAL — The State Road Commission Friday deferred action on awarding a contract to tear out 15 miles of abandoned railroad track in Provo Canyon where once the so-called "Heber Creeper" carried freight.

Commission members responded to a "save-the-track" movement that developed in the Heber-Provo area and agreed to meet again Sept. 22 in Salt Lake City to attempt to make a final determination.

The rail line has been abandoned for about 10 years and was operated by Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Co. as a three-times weekly freight-only route. A recently acquired right-of-way and track two years ago because road widening plans called for either using the right of way or cutting into the sides of the canyon.

At Friday's meeting, members of the Vernal Chamber of Commerce and the Uintah County Commission endorsed the department's widening efforts in Provo Canyon.

The track-removal project was bid upon several weeks ago, but because of an error in bidding, the low bidder was disqualified.